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855 861 868 member of his own tribe. In the training of the Indian children the power of example and the natural desire to imitate has the most effect. It is interesting to note how the young boys constantly watch the occupations of the elder men and how easily in this way they acquire the necessary skill in the same occupations, above all in fishing and hunting. When the Toba boy is about six or seven years old, his father makes him a small bow and arrows with which he frequently practises shooting, thus at an early age acquiring dexterity in managing the weapon. Similarly the girls follow their mothers everywhere, down to the river, to the fields, and the forest, keenly watching how she does her work and soon learning to do the same.

881 As far as I know, no particular ceremonies are performed among the Choroti and Mataco with young boys at the attainment of puberty, nor do the present day Tobas in Bolivia practise any ceremonies of this kind. According to some ancient writers, the Tobas of the 18th century practised certain ceremonies with young boys, consisting of a peculiar arrangement of their hair and in pricking them on the body with sharp-pointed bones, but since the particular purpose of these ceremonies was to initiate them into the profession of a warrior, I shall reserve the details till later on, in treating of Indian warfare.

On the other hand, when a young girl has her first menstruation and becomes marriageable, the incident is celebrated among all Chaco tribes with certain feasts, dances, beer-drinking, and purely religious rites. In order fully to understand these ceremonies it is necessary to know the ideas which the Indians entertain about the mysterious phenomena of puberty. It is by no means sufficient to say that the puberty ceremonies simply serve to initiate the girl into her coming sexual life; their significance is much deeper.

881 941 [821] The physiological process which causes the menstruation of the women, incomprehensible as it seems to the Indian, strikes him as something extremely mysterious and must needs give rise to certain superstitious beliefs. Thus both the Tobas and the other Chaco tribes seem to have the idea that this strange phenomenon is caused, or at any rate influenced, by the new moon. Moreover, since the menstrual periods, and especially the first menses, are as a rule connected with certain nervous disorders and other alterations in the physical condition of the woman, it is naturally thought that during these critical days she is seriously exposed to the influence of evil spirits. At the same time, of course, owing to the awakening sexual desire, the relationship between this physiological

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process and the other procreative functions of the woman is realized. The attainment of puberty therefore for the Indian girl certainly means the beginning of her sexual life, but at the same time it means her entrance into a very critical epoch of development, during which she is often — especially at child-birth and during the following menses — exposed to supernatural dangers. Hence the initiation ceremonies at puberty have for their object partly her direct protection against these dangers for the time being, partly her purification once for all from the evils associated with her sexual functions during the years to come or — to express it more plainly — to *harden* her against evil spirits. From this point of view we have to regard all puberty ceremonies of the Indians, even such practices as painting, scarification, and tattooing of the body or face, often undertaken with girls on the attainment of puberty.

In the dances and conjurations performed in honour of girls at puberty it is the women who, contrary to what is generally the rule in religious ceremonies, play the most prominent part. Among the *Choroti* the puberty of girls is celebrated with a magical dance called *Káusima* after the instrument which the women use for it; the instrument is called *káhuis*. The *káhuis* is a dancing-staff, two or three meters in length, made of a light kind of wood or bamboo, which has a bunch of deer's hoofs tied at the top. These rattles produce a hollow sound when the staff is struck on the ground and are supposed to possess a mysterious power to influence the spirits. This power of course must be explained from the fact that to the Choroti the deer is a demoniacal animal. The *káhuis* staff is the only magical instrument used by the Choroti women and it is never handled by the men.

The dance begins at the first new moon after the appearance of the signs of puberty, because the moon is believed to cause and have great influence upon the menstruation of women. It is performed every day until the following new moon, sometimes even still longer. At a *Káusima* dance which I witnessed the arrangement was as follows. The mother of the girl and some other elderly women formed a circle, or rather an elliptic ring, outside the hut where the girl was, each holding her rattling dancing -staff. Close to the ring four medicine-men were sitting at equal distances from one another, holding their rattle gourds (*pelite*). There were besides two more medicine-men standing up, each provided with a drum. During the dance the women moved round ceremoniously with slow, regular steps, chanting loudly and marking time with their rattle staffs which they struck on the ground. The men outside the ring also chanted, shaking

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The aversion to eating fish among the Toba women is met with in connection with mourning customs also. As to the ideas underlying this superstition, they will be considered in a later chapter.

The puberty ceremonies of the Bolivian *Mataco* are much the same as those of the Tobas. The first menstruation (*opetetéih* in the Mataco language) is regarded as a critical event which necessitates certain precautions. As is the case among the Tobas, these precautions are more elaborate when the girl is the daughter of a great chief. In that case she is completely isolated for five days, strictly dieting. Every evening drums are beaten outside her hut to keep off the evil spirits, the *aitláh* or *nahút* which are trying to do her harm. As usual, a drinking-feast is arranged for the men.

If the girl is the daughter of an ordinary man she is allowed to go out, but every evening a dance is held in her honour. This is the ring-dance which the Mataco call *Nahútsak* and which like all Mataco dances is purely ceremonial in its character. The girl sits in the middle of the ring, having the face covered with a cloth, while the other women dance and chant around her in order to keep off the *nahút*.

Not only the first menstruation, but similarly the following monthly courses of a woman are regarded by the Mataco as critical in so far as she is then particularly exposed to supernatural dangers. The Mataco woman therefore on these occasions always takes the precaution to restrict her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish and meat.

There is one more custom which is practised among many Chaco tribes at the time of puberty and therefore may be considered in this connection — the custom of *tattooing*. Tattooing is done by the *Mataco* and the *Choroti* in about the same way, the women being always and the men sometimes tattooed. The operation is carried out by an old woman: the skin is pricked with a cactus thorn or a sharp bone so that the blood flows, whereupon soot mixed with saliva is carefully rubbed into the wounds. Since the operation is of course extremely painful and makes the girl sick for some days, it is performed gradually, during the course of several years, the intention being that it should be completed when the girl is marriageable. Only the face is tattooed. The first marks are done on the forehead when the girl is about six or seven years old. In the course of the following years new marks — small circles, crosses, half-moons, lines — are added, and when the girl has attained the age of twelve to fourteen years and is considered marriageable, practically the whole face is covered with them. Since the wounds rubbed with ashes cause

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this may be, it is now impossible to get a positive explanation from the Indians themselves as to their real motives for observing this ancient custom.

The dietary rules observed by the *Tobas* are in many respects more detailed than those of other Chaco tribes. I have mentioned for instance that when a girl reaches the age of puberty she is bound to fast strictly, being particularly forbidden to eat fish and meat. On the other hand, she is enjoined to eat the leaves of the tusca tree and the leaves and fruit of the vine which the Tobas call *charáde*. These leaves and fruit probably possess some magical properties which are believed to have beneficial effects upon the girl. Dobrizhoffer, speaking of the puberty customs of the ancient Abipones, mentions that the girl had to abstain from fish and meat and was only allowed to feed on »a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the blood». By this fruit he evidently meant the *tasi*-fruit (*charáde*) which is eaten on the same occasion by the Toba girls of the present day.

Among the Tobas and the Mataco, and probably also among the Choroti, a woman is always bound to diet during her menstrual periods, since she is at these periods more or less exposed to supernatural dangers. The Toba woman carefully abstains from eating fish, and her only food is a dish prepared of boiled maize and called *euóhi* in the Toba language. An infringement of these rules would be likely to bring about the terrible consequences which have been mentioned above. Similarly, when a child has been born in a family, both the father and the mother of the child must live on a restricted diet.

Again, after a Toba man has died, his widow, daughter, and other female relatives carefully avoid eating fish. If they infringe this rule, they will, according to the belief of the Tobas, sicken and die or go mad. Instead of fish, maize is eaten. Even some of the men observe the same custom, abstaining from fish for some time after the death of a relative.

All these food restrictions are, no doubt, based upon the same idea, namely, that evil spirits may hide in the forbidden food and gain entrance into the body if it is eaten. At any rate spirits are in some way associated with the food. With regard to the fish this is expressly stated. It is a curious fact that fish, which is the principal food of the Tobas, is so religiously shunned on certain occasions. Behind this superstition there are undoubtedly real experiences as to the harmful effects that the eating of fish may bring. Thus the Tobas assert that incautious

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X539 X773 to get water they had to follow ropes to the river. There were heavy storms and hail stones hurled through the roofs and the wind blew huts away. Many people died.

7. The Sun (Pedro)

X539 X773 S21 The sun is a big medicine-man. When he is angry the world turns to darkness. The sun has two huts one of which he leaves in the morning. The other is situated on the side where he goes to sleep. Out of this hut a staircase of five hundred steps leads down under the ground. The sun always goes back to his starting point by an underground passage.

During the summer the days are long because the sun is an old man who walks slowly and with difficulty. It takes him a long time to make his trip. In the winter the sun is a boy who can run quickly. That is why the days are short.

When the sun makes his fire with *palo santo* wood it gets very hot on the earth. The sun is not, but he has a big fire and it is the heat from this fire which we feel on earth. In summer it is hot and the sun scorches the algarroba. When the algarroba is quite dry the sun unleashes a storm in order that the fruit may fall, then it becomes hot again for another harvest. The two harvests of the sun correspond to those of men. (Another explanation of heat is that somewhere very far away there is a big ship, like those on the Bermejo, and it is the smoke of these ships that is the heat.)

8. The Moon (Pedro)

The full moon is old, worn out and tired. Like old people, he walks slowly. When he gets very old he dies, then comes a storm. Afterwards he is born again. All men are the children of the moon. Before he dies he sends them a reminder. [841] That is why women menstruate when the moon dies.

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The moon is a great thief. He always steals something, cows in particular. Once the men got angry and wanted to kill him. The sun said, »I don't wish you to kill my friend but if you do I will go away.» The men were afraid and they let the moon eat the cows.

The moon had sexual intercourse with a woman. That is why women menstruate. From the intercourse of the moon with that woman a boy and girl were born. They were the first people.

If a woman dreams about an old man she will find that she is menstruating when she wakens. Her soul has had intercourse with the moon who is very old and looks like an old man. Each month when a woman is about to menstruate, she dreams about that old man.

9. Sun and Moon (Pedro)

The sun and the moon are friends. The sun helps and protects the moon. If anybody wants to kill the moon, the sun says, »He is my friend, I will kill you.» The sun went off to catch lice. He found white lice and gave some of them to the moon. The moon was not satisfied with these lice and said. »I am an expert in catching lice.» He went off, but he did'nt return. The sun said, »What is the matter with the moon?» He went to look for him. He found the moon very ill. One of the lice the moon had caught had bored a big hole in his head. The sun brought a comb, dressed his hair and the moon was well again. (VIII, p. 97).[1]

10. Why the Moon is Yellow (Pedro)

The sun wanted spears. He dived into a river and changed himself into a big yellow fish (*atsa*).[2] When the Indians saw this fish they tried to kill him with spears. The back of the

[1] Roman figures refer to the notes beginning on on p. 90.

[2] A *dorado* fish.

cine-man why he has come. He answers, »I came to have a talk, to call on you and become your friend.» They become friends. 756 821

V. Origin of the Rio Bermejo

The Rio Bermejo is very deep for it was dug by a big *tatu careta* (giant armadillo) who wanted to go to the source of the river. 823

VI. The New Moon

When there is a new moon, the Indians dance and beat on their drums (*pimpim*). The man who plays a drum wears a belt with hanging pendants of metal, hoofs and so on. They put water into the drum so that the hide will not get dry. 821 535 534

VII. Menstruation

It is the moon who sleeps first with the girls and that is why they menstruate. When a young girl is menstruating for the first time, she must begin working and doing all she will have to do later on. If she does not keep active during this period, then she will be lazy all her life. She must be in semi-seclusion for five days, only going out with her father's permission. She may not marry or have sexual intercourse until after her first menstruation. When a woman is menstruating, she must not go to the bush where she could easily become frightened and die. 881 841

VIII. Eclipses

An eclipse of the sun or moon foretells disease. When either the sun or moon becomes angry with men it covers itself. To have it uncover it is necessary to beat drums, shout, sing and to make all kinds of noise. When the sun is covered one may expect smallpox. 821 787

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IX. Storms

821 761 When a storm approaches with rain and thunder, little children's ears are to be covered each time the thunder crashes, otherwise Rain would take them under his arm and carry them away to his house. When such a thing happens, the child's body, which has remained on earth, becomes lean and white and all the food he takes is of no use. He visibly pines away, and it is not likely that a medicine-man can cure him. He will finally die without the cause of his death being known. The rain cannot do anything to grown-ups or big children, for it has not the strength to carry them away, [841] but it can harm menstruating women who happen to be out during a storm. Then they get very feeble.

X. Shooting Stars

821 781 Shooting stars foretell the death of someone. Meteors are stones thrown by the rain in order to fell the *quebracho*.

XI. Treatment of Snake Bites

752 825 When a serpent bites a man, it goes into the wound and climbs up in his body. When a man's foot is bitten by a-snake the leg must be pressed starting from the thigh, squeezing down to the place where he has been bitten. In so doing, the snake which has already had time to enter the leg, is obliged to go down into the big toe where it rolls itself up, tired. The operation lasts from evening to dawn and when the sun appears the snake gets cramped and vanishes under the ground. Once the snake is out the medicine-man has to suck the wound, for the departing snake has left its skin inside the body of the victim. The patient is completely cured only when the last piece of skin left by the snake has been removed. Otherwise he remains sick, has a headache and gets thinner and thinner.

If the progress of the snake inside the body cannot be stopped, the animal may go up into the head and blind the victim. It also goes to the heart and after repeated bites

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relatives of the patient) and three dancers. All wore rattles. 755

The medicine-men sang and blew on the patient, who shook the bells, while the dancers and the assistants stamped in one place and let their rattles jingle. The dancers then started to run from left to right and thus made a complete circle. For the second turn, when they arrived at the height of the sticks, they reversed and ran around in the opposite direction, then reversed again and so on. While the assistants were stamping their feet, singing and shaking their rattles, the medicine-men went on singing and blowing. The patient had not moved during the dance. After they had run around ten times, the dancers went to rest, smoke and talk with the assistants, but the medicine-men still blew and shook their rattles. The patient was still motionless. After a quarter of an hour the dance was resumed, this time to the accompaniment of the patient's bells and rattles which all present were shaking. All seemed to be rather happy. The ceremony was then over and they sat down to smoke. The sticks were removed and the ornaments taken off, first those of the medicine-men, then the assistants and dancers, and finally those of the patient. The patient returned quietly to his hut. 755 535

XV. Sexual Life

Before marriage nothing prevents young people from having a free sexual life. The girls paint their faces red if they have had sexual intercourse the preceding night. 836 302

In love affairs before marriage it is always the women who take the initiative. 836

If a man has sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman his loins and head will ache. As for the woman, she is in no danger. 833 841

You must not sleep with a woman whose child has not yet cut any teeth for the woman will lose her mind and as the child cannot eat alone he will die. 834 828

776 The Indians will willingly speak about the lewo, mythical animals which live in the lakes and which look like serpents. Their [824] breath forms the rainbow (lewo-tutsax, which means lewo breath). [841] The lewo have a horror of women during the period of menstruation and if any woman should approach a pool or river in that state, the lewo will call up a tempest.

The Witch Doctors

756 The witch doctors get their power from the spirits, who teach them the magic dances. The soul of a witch doctor can be snatched away by a wilan or spirit and shut up in a tree. The spirit teaches him the language of the spirits and when his education is complete the spirit blows upon the novice and confers upon him the power of caring for the sick by the same means, that is, by blowing upon them. The meetings between spirits and witch doctors are very frequent, and take place at night.

In order to take the soul out of the body and send it on a super-natural mission, the witch doctors inhale up their noses a powder made [278] with roasted grains of sebil (Piptadenia sp.) to which they sometimes [824] add powdered tobacco. These inhalations cause them to become dazed [16] and then it is that the witch doctor's soul abandons his body and turns into an insect or a bird--usually the yulo--and goes off to alight on a tree which stands in the middle of a lake. This tree is perpetually shaking and it is extremely difficult to stay on it. A grave misfortune overtakes those who fall for they are immediately devoured by the palometas ["piranas" - a laterally flattened, ferocious, small fish - Translator] and crocodiles which swam in the lake. If the witch doctors are expert in their art they change themselves into lizards and so manage to stay on the tree. It is supposed that each witch doctor owns a branch of that tree which is closely allied with his destiny. While the leaves remain green the witch doctor enjoys good health and is in no danger but as soon as the branch starts to wither then his troubles begin.

[821] The witch doctors can predict good and bad weather for a long time in advance, for on their journeyings they see the green and dry leaves corresponding to the good and bad seasons of the year.